

REMARKS

New claims 74-82 are added by this amendment. New claim 74 recites that the bonus game comprises a plurality of aspects. New claim 75 recites that the at least three related symbols depict an aspect of the bonus game. New claim 76 recites that the at least three related symbols relate to an aspect of a bowling game. Claims 77-79 and 80-82 are analogous to claims 74-76. This matter is supported in the specification at least at paragraph 25. No new matter is introduced.

Claims 48-73 are pending and at issue in this application. Of these, claims 48, 58, and 66 are independent.

Applicants respectfully traverse the rejection of claims 48, 58, and 66 as anticipated by U.K. Patent Application No. GB 2,262,642 ("Claypole") and claims 49-57, 59-65, and 67-73, depending respectfully therefrom, as obvious over Claypole in further view of any combination of U.S. Patent No. 6,050,895 ("Luciano"), U.S. Patent No. 6,379,250 ("Adamczyk"), and U.K. Patent Application No. GB 2,147,773 ("Dickinson").

Each of claims 48-73 now recites a gaming apparatus for, or a gaming method of allowing a player to operate a second input device to play an aspect of a bonus game in a display region if there are at least three related symbols in display regions that are contiguous and that relate to the aspect of the bonus game. Claypole does not disclose allowing a player to operate a second input device to play an aspect of a bonus game if there are at least three related symbols that are contiguous and that relate to the aspect of the bonus game. Therefore, Claypole cannot anticipate claims 48, 58, or 66 or claims 48-57, 58-65, or 67-73, which depend from them, respectively.

At issue is the triggering condition for the bonus game. The method and device of the pending claims recites a trigger based on at least three related symbols that are contiguous

and that relate to an aspect of the bonus game, whereas Claypole uses a trail system to trigger the bonus game. Claypole discloses that its trail system comprises trail value numbers associated with a minority of fruit game symbols. Claypole also discloses that the trail system triggers a bonus game only when a minimum threshold value is met or exceeded by adding the trail value numbers displayed for each play of the fruit machine. Therefore, Claypole teaches that a single symbol will trigger the bonus game if the trail number associated with the symbol is greater than the threshold. Claypole further discloses that three contiguous related symbols may never trigger the bonus game if the trail numbers that are displayed do not add pass the threshold amount. Thus, the trail system of Claypole fails to disclose the triggering element of the pending claims for at least two reasons. First, the trail system of Claypole can trigger a bonus game based on just one or two displayed symbols, regardless of relationship of the symbols, whereas the pending claims recite allowing a player to operate a second input device to play a bonus game if there are at least three related symbols that are contiguous. Second, Claypole will never trigger a bonus game when three contiguous related symbols are displayed if trail numbers are not associated with the displayed symbols. Therefore, Claypole does not disclose the triggering condition recited by the pending claims.

Moreover, Claypole cannot render any of the claims obvious because Claypole does not recognize the advantage of allowing play of an aspect of a bonus game when achieving at least three related contiguous symbols that relate to the aspect of the bonus game. By relating the symbols themselves to aspects of the bonus game, the play of the fruit machine can be made to directly depend on how the player performs in the bonus game. For example, in the bowling game embodiment, the alignment of three "Strike Bonus" symbols in a row may trigger a "strike bonus" event, as opposed to a "spare bonus" event triggered when three

"Spare Bonus" symbols are aligned. (See specification paragraph 25). This connection may increase frequency of play and thereby increase profitability of the game machine. This may happen, for example, in a bonus game embodiment where a player is enticed to play the fruit machine game several times in order to win a continuing bonus game, thereby increasing the frequency of game play of the fruit machine. Claypole does not suggest that this can or should be done.

Futhermore, because the trail value trigger mechanism of Claypole provides an additional obstacle for players to overcome in order to play any bonus game, Claypole teaches away from the triggering condition of the recited invention. Whereas a direct link can be established by triggering play of a particular aspect of the bonus game using symbols associated with that aspect, Claypole would require a player to obtain a minimum cumulative total trail value with numbers unrelated to the bonus game in order to even play the bonus game. Thus, using the trail system trigger of Claypole in the invention of the pending claims would render the device and method of the pending claims inoperable.

Applicants further traverse the rejection of any of pending claims 48-73 as obvious over Claypole in further view of any combination of Luciano, Adamczyk, and Dickinson.

Each of the pending claims recite a gaming apparatus or gaming method that allows a player to operate a second input device to play an aspect of a bonus game in a display region if there are at least three related symbols in display regions that are contiguous and that relate to an aspect of the bonus game. As mentioned above, Claypole does not disclose or suggest this element. None of Luciano, Adamczyk, and Dickinson disclose this element, and thus no combination of the Luciano, Adamczyk, and Dickinson can contain this element. It follows, therefore, that no combination of Claypole, Luciano, Adamczyk, and Dickinson can render

any of the pending claims obvious. In view of the above amendment, applicant believes the pending application is in condition for allowance.

CONCLUSION


Applicants have now made an earnest attempt to place this case in condition for immediate allowance. For the foregoing reasons, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and allowance of claims 48-82.

If there are matters that can be discussed by telephone to further the prosecution of this application, Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner call their attorney at the number listed below.

Respectfully submitted,

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